



Embassy of the United States of America

109 "A" Ismoili Somoni Avenue, Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan,

Phones: (992 37) 229-20-00

Fax: (992 37) 229-20-50

<http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov>

TRANSCRIPT

Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke
Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan

PRESS BRIEFING AT PRESIDENTIAL PALACE

February 20, 2010

AMBASSADOR HOLBROOKE -- Delighted to be here in Dushanbe. We're running very late, so I'm only going to make a statement and not take any questions. I'm sorry.

AMBASSADOR HOLBROOKE -- President Rahmon gave me a very detailed and extremely informative explanation of Tajikistan's situation in Central Asia and in the region. He outlined his sphere of relations with Afghanistan, his appreciation of the bridge that the United States helped construct, his desire for additional support to build an additional bridge, and support for CASA 1000 [power transmission line project - from **C**entral **A**sia to **S**outh **A**sia] and other projects of great importance to Tajikistan's economic development. We talked especially about energy and water, and about Tajikistan's capabilities to help deal with the water crisis in other parts of the region, especially Pakistan and India. For ethnic, geographic, and strategic reasons, Tajikistan is a country of immense importance if one wants to have a peaceful outcome in Afghanistan. So, it has taken me too long to get to Tajikistan, but there were other issues that commanded my attention last year. I had met however with President Rahmon in New York during the (U.N.) General Assembly, and with the Foreign Minister ten days ago in Washington. So this is my third meeting with senior government officials in the last six months, and I assure you it will not be our last. I came here bringing the best wishes of the American people, of President Obama, of Secretary of State Hilary Clinton. And I look forward to returning soon, thank you.

QUESTION -- Sir, can I have one question please. Do you see any evidence of the Taliban (inaudible) threat (inaudible) Central Asia?

AMBASSADOR HOLBROOKE -- I think the real threat in this region is less from Taliban than from Al Qaeda, which wants to train international terrorists. But that is an issue of common concern to the United States and to all the countries of this region. And by all the countries, I definitely include Pakistan and China and India. Thank you.

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